5 Nov 1964

Teilhard

(advance of man
but not man
the artist)

Fr. Daniel Hughes
& becoming a Catholic
(1917)

N.B. Not read this newspaper though so heaven knows what rubbish it contains D.

Poor Guy Fawkes. He was a brave man

Monksdene Hotel
2, Northwick Park Rd
Harrow, Middlesex, ~~[illegible]~~

Thursday 5th Nov. 1964.

Dearest René

Thank you so much for your letter or letters rather. it was awfully kind of you to write — I know how awful the writing of letters is — I seem to do nothing else — & as you say the time goes like lightning — it seems only about a month since I came here from Northwick L. & now it's winter again & bloody cold. So glad you got over to Barbara M's house & liked her pictures. She came to visit me on my birthday on Sunday afternoon and spoke with affection of Joan & yourself. & said the house (your house) was lovely. I never knew, curiously enough, where her home was in Ireland — she's never talked much of it — but I understand that it's not a great distance off as things go nowadays. She's a wonderful person. & has been very kind to me. I especially love her straightforwardness & total lack of affectation about anything. Dear Mick R. rang me up from Bristol, the other day — I'd not heard from him for a while, but he'd been away. I said that Robin had done especially well at the training place he's in — I'm so glad. Yes, I liked your description of Rosaline & her friend on the horses on the hill in the red light. Must have been very beautiful.

Bottle. Yes. I wholly agree, no one ~~[illegible]~~ could sweat more ~~[illegible]~~ on trying to do the stuff — "Swatting his deadbest to think what under the canopies of Jansens Chrest would any decent son of an Albiogenselman who had bin to an university think, let a lent bit a bint and begin to tell all the intelligentsia admitted to that tamileasy samtalaisy conclamazzione (since, still and before physicians, lawyers merchant, belfry pollititians, agricolous manufraudurers sacrestanes of the Pure River Society, philanthropicks lodging on as many boards round the panesthetic at the same time as possible) the whole lifelong swine story. etc." but, as you say, I fear it's not of much avail. I cannot but admire his painstaking efforts, but the result I don't think will be in proportion to the effort. This Biography writing business is a rum ~~[illegible]~~ thing — you see. with the same application and I'm sure sincere desire to get everything right, he's written biographies of Belloc, Old Rothenstein, now Eric, & then ~~[illegible]~~ he is going to start on ~~[illegible]~~ de Chardin — at least so I understood from someone — maybe he told me himself, but I think it was Louis Bonnerot or someone else who told me. I don't know. it seems to me not a good thing. At a lower or more popular level, biography writing might ~~[illegible]~~ work better — as a sort of journalism I mean — you know, these chaps who write Biographies of almost anybody in rapid succession. Alexander the Great, then St Paul, then Robert Bruce, then Mrs Pankhurst, then Cleopatra, then Lord Kitchener, then Wolf Tone, then Pius IX, then Niall of the Nine Hostages, then Dr Livingstone & so on. But if it comes to serious, careful, long, studied biographies, ~~that~~ the sort of work that must become the locus classicus for future reference then it's a totally different matter. & one rather suspects the switching about. However perhaps I'm being unfair, I suppose there is use for all sorts of shades &

Joyce in Shem the Penman section of the Wake

my Lord! he's unbearable. The "tamileasy samtalaisy conclamazzione" but reminds me of your own "Aloysi go easy, senna-pod easy, got a clock by no means easy, piece King." if I've remembered it right — it seems to be longer than that.

Yes, I feel from what little I've read of Chardin, very much as you do. Too big a matter to go into here, but a curiously ambivalent feeling I have about him. Of course you've read much more. I've read only The phenomena of Man & Le Milieu Divin the first I found ~~[illegible]~~ interesting but was totally unable to judge, not being a scientist, ~~that~~ anything about the validity of this thing: The second I found exceedingly moving — I mean a great & truly religious mind was obviously behind it. But seemingly, he never appears to have tackled the total disparity between the 'advance' of man scientifically & the very different story of man-the-artist, nor the fact that with this technological advance there come enormous reverses and deprivations — whereby the 'utile' thing more & more precludes the notion of ~~[illegible]~~ making things which are signa & so on, without which neither the arts, nor any sacramental etc. religion can have meaning.

But given this manifest depth of apperception it seems an impertinence to say this. What a damn nuisance that the man isn't alive so that one could find out just what he would say of this. There is, as you say, that haunting feeling that somewhere he's right. but, & what a but! If only one could find out whether a ~~[illegible]~~ he did understand the reality of this dilemma.

A young American Jesuit wrote to me, a, so to say, 'fan' of The Anathemata, who asked me if I knew Chardin, because he thought it said in another mode what Chardin says. I didn't know what to answer, but did try and indicate my duality of feeling about Chardin. It's a difficult world & no mistake.

kinds of biography writing. But ~~A~~ the case of E.G. is exceptionally difficult – ~~some aspects would~~ it would be better to confine oneself to some aspect & not try to present a rounded off totality – far too complex, and no amount putting the jig-saw puzzle together by painstaking efforts to discover what chaps such as ourselves, or Donald or Walter or Philip Hag. or Core-of-~~[illegible]~~ Ill-will Flood or the girls or Muleteer Cribb or dear old Plainsong & Cricket Jellyguts. or Water-wont-rust-you-or-me Reeves*, to name but a few, will, of itself, avail. Better really to just convey one's own impressions – what appeared to be the man as far as one could see from his works & from the what his personality irradiated ~~in~~ ~~say~~ to oneself. The alternative ~~in a life work~~ requires a life-time of investigation and even then I don't know whether it arrive anywhere much. Anyway I do agree with you that for B's sort of biography, one would have to chance one's arm & not be so obsessed with not making a false step. I admire him for conscientious trying to discover from us all who knew Eric in differing ways, but I share with you the fear that it will not be a fully successful – unless, of course he has got some apperception of his own and merely uses these fragments of information as check-ups. Still, we shall see – maybe it will turn out better than we think. But I do suspect this biography-writing business. I don't know, but with due respect to him, it does seem to me a bit much to turn from Belloc to Rothenstein, to Snig. to Chardin. I can't see how a profound grasp & apperception can be expected in that way. It's not the same thing as the journalistic switches of, say Chesterton, who could write straight off about Browning, Dickens, Chaucer, &, although, to us, irritating in style, & much besides, had brilliant intuitions, & if there were a lot of wides or outers & some inners there were a whole lot of rounds plonk on the bull's-eye. and Gilson said of G.K.'s little pot-boiler book on Aquinas that ~~it~~ it was the best general summary of St Thomas' attitude he knew of – in spite of the fact that old G.K.C. didn't know a bloody thing about scholastic philosophy in the professional sense, so I was told by a very reliable chap, who also said that ~~[illegible]~~ G.K.C. in his knockabout way had absolutely got the core of the matter, none the less. Well, I don't know, perhaps the analogy is pointless.

What I can't get over is the energy of Bobbie. for where does he draw ~~his~~ strength? He goes everywhere ~~[illegible]~~ & knows everybody in orbis bloody terrarum. Chap came to see me from Metz a Jesuit who I'd known for a few years because he's interested in my writing, & he said Bobbie had delivered a marvellous lecture in French on Shakespeare. (Christ, I'm sick of hearing about Shakespeare this year). Any way this Frog, jolly nice chap, was hugely impressed by B.

When Bobbie asks me various things about, ~~for example~~ for example, the ~~[illegible]~~ Ditchling schism between Hilary & others Eric & others, I found I knew practically nothing whatever about it – beyond the fact that there were various deviations of view & certain practical

*The latter was at dear Charlie B's funeral. Someone, must have been Tom. met him there.

Incidentally all these sorts of agnomina remind me of one I like especially, to wit: No-flint Gray. A name given to an ancestor of that ~~[illegible]~~ blind, elder statesman, I used to meet at Helen S's ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ 35 years ago. Lord Gray of Falloden. I remember, because some ancestor of his had been in command of some troops in America & he orders all the men to remove the bits of flint from their flint-locks muskets, so that they candidly could not fire, but would have to engage the enemy at bayonet-point. It was in some action that required ~~[illegible]~~ surprise & secrecy. & he was afraid that if anyone had a musket that would fire they might be tempted to use it. So he resolved to remove the possibility.

③

considerations such as that Eric wanted to get away from the publicity - [illegible] show-place-Catholic-community-of-lay-people thing within easy access of London & wanted to get into a more remote place, for I had no idea of the far deeper complexities.* Well, I knew there were various disagreements of various sorts but nothing much more than that. I knew that E.G. was bitter about Hilary but realised that only afterwards, when he tried to interfere with Betty's marriage to David P. - not that he ever talked to me of it in any direct way, but I realised he was pretty put out about it - but I put that down to irritation & remember thinking how odd it was that a man of such perception in many matters should be so stupid as to imagine (whatever his reasons or feelings) that a love affair such as Betty's & David's could be disposed of by some argument or other still less by a show of hostility - But of course Eric was appalling bad at understanding human psychology - that came out in all sorts of connections sometimes causing great pain to himself, sometimes to other people. I suppose it went with that other thing of imagining that if one beat a chap in argument that meant that one was right, whereas all it means is that one has been more able as an arguer than the other chap. Enough.

*Well, that's not strictly true, but I had precious little idea. I was not in the inner counsels of the Guild & moreover, was not particularly interested. I was very fond of Hilary P. & needless to say, of Eric. I knew there was some bother about money matters as well as other things, but thought it was just a kind of clash of temperaments. I gathered from Bobbie that Philip H. thought Hilary had behaved quite badly, in which case why the hell did he go back to live at Ditchling - it all beats me. Not that it matters a bugger now. As a matter of fact I can't quite see why in this biography the split at Ditchling had to be gone into really. After all groups of chaps always do disagree at some point. Hence all these splits in ~~Re~~ religious orders - Cistercian from Benedictines, reformed & unreformed Carmelites etc. etc.

I got a bit muddled in your letter (the one for my birthday) as to ~~A~~ who Ann was. ~~[illegible]~~ You say, I think, I can't properly read one word, but I think you say "a charming & amusing couple, Ann is a honey." Does this refer to Bobbie & his wife? I did meet his present wife only once, I think, at Tom's some years back. But I can't remember what she looked like, or anything.

I remember his Welsh wife years & years ago. She had a heavenly voice, like Valerie's, only deeper, and dark hair & white skin. An awful thing happened, I remember, I was asked to ~~[illegible]~~ lunch very soon after they had been married, it was a very hot ~~[illegible]~~ summer's day in June I think & the lunch was salmon with mayonnaise followed by strawberries & cream. ~~A~~ All of which I loathe, but I did not know whether to eat the stuff out of courtesy & feel ill afterwards or say outright that I did not eat salmon, mayonnaise, or strawberries or cream. I decided ~~only~~ on the latter action. Mercifully there was a maid or someone in the house who was ill in bed, either with, or recovering from, apendicitis, & some plain boiled chicken was prepared for her, so all was well - at least I hope so. I mean I hope there was enough boiled chicken for the ~~[illegible]~~ ill maid & for me as well. Do you remember how we went to see some American lady in Kensington, I think, on a hot summer day, I can't think what about, ~~[illegible]~~ we went to tea & were looking forward to a cup of char but she produced iced-coffee. I've forgotten whether I drank that or not. I imagine not. Wonder who it was.

Valerie has had a new baby - it was born in October in St David's Hospital, Bangor. ~~[illegible]~~

④

Valerie is all right & so is the baban, It's a girl-child ~~and~~ it is called Ffion, pronounced Fee-on, accent on first syllable. It's a very ancient Welsh word, but as far as we know, not before used as a name. It means as a common noun any red flowers — especially red foxgloves and also roses, I don't mean that it's the Welsh word for either roses or foxgloves ordinarily, but can be applied to them. ~~[illegible]~~ When ~~I heard the name was~~ Valerie told me that the name was to be Ffion, ~~[illegible]~~ she said she had seen it somewhere or something like it & that anyway it didn't matter as it was a jolly nice name, ~~but~~ she hoped I'd like it & had I ever heard it before. Well, I hadn't, but messed about with Welsh dictionaries and things & found that it was a word, a substantive, masculine, defined as Blodau cochion, 'red flowers', especially bysedd y cŵn (literally toes or fingers of ~~th~~ dogs — the Welsh word for foxgloves) — dogs' ~~feet~~ I suppose we'd say. and rhosyn rose, or rather rhos, roses; it's a collective noun. Then I remembered that in that Culhwch and Olwen tale my favourite Welsh prose-tale (the one about the giant boar-hunt & winning of Olwen, the giant's daughter, for Culhwch) in the description of Olwen it says something like this: ~~A garment~~ 'About her was silk, flame-red and a torque of red gold circled the neck of the maiden, set with margarites* very precious, and red gems. More yellow her head than the broom-flower, more white her flesh than the wave's foam, whiter her palms and fingers than the ~~[illegible]~~ marsh-trefoil that shoots up from the fine ~~[illegible]~~ silt of the stream-bed. ~~[illegible]~~ Not the eye of the mewed hawk nor of the ~~well-kept~~ thrice-mewed falcon, nor any eye other, was fair-bright as hers, whiter than the breast of the white swan were her two breasts, & her cheeks came red ~~redder than~~ more red than the reddest foxgloves." The final word used in the medieval MS ~~[illegible]~~ is fion. In Modern Welsh it would be spelt ffion, because in Modern Welsh a single f is pronounced v. & a ff = f. In Medieval Welsh spelling they used v as in English & f as in English. I don't know when, how or why the change was made. In Lady Guest trans. of the Mabinogion she translated ffion as 'roses', but more recent Welsh scholarship ~~[illegible]~~ gives 'foxgloves'.

I wonder if you could tell me from your Irish studies, or could find out, when you have time, if that Irish girl's name Fionna (spelling?) has a similiar meaning to the Welsh common noun ffion? I should think that it had, because it is a very ancient Welsh form & the more ancient the word in Welsh the more likelihood is there of it having a nearer ~~[illegible]~~ Goedelic equivalent. Of course Celtic scholars can follow innumerable identical roots in Welsh & Irish words, but ignorant sods like me can see the equivalence in only the more obvious ones & they are always very early. Thus rhi is a Welsh word for king or ruler, identical with Old Irish, is it not?* but it ~~is~~ was not used in Welsh except very early. Brenin replaces it & sometimes teyrn. Rhi is still given in Welsh dictionaries, but marked as obsolete or obsolescent. Teyrn is

*mererit is the form used in the MS. and comes straight from Lat. margarita. it would be mererid now, but the dict. gives no plural. Have looked in Welsh Bible for passages where 'pearls' occur but the trans. use an English loan-word, perlau.

X I don't know what this means whether a falcon that had moulted three times or had been in mews over a long period and was therefore well-trained & gentle. You ~~[illegible]~~ remember that in some English poem it says, or 'gentle as falcon', in Skelton's poem to Margaret Hussey, "Gentle as falcon or hawk of the tower"

yes, ~~[illegible]~~ in such Indo-European root

*Spelt Rí in Irish but I don't know how pronounced.

comes from the same Indo-European root as Lat. Rex.

⑤

given as current, but I don't think it is often used, but teyrnas 'Kingdom' is always used as e.g. in the Pater noster in Welsh adveniat regnum tuum is deued dy Deyrnas 'come thy Kingdom'.

Nov 6th Friday. Sorry for the terrible meander, I seem more & more incapable of writing a reasonably brief letter or keeping to the point.

Did I tell you, after being badgered to send a couple of things to the Visual Arts section of the National Eisteddfod in August at Swansea, I was awarded the Medal Aur y Celfyddydau Cain 'the Gold Medal of the Fine Arts'. I believe I did tell you, because I think I mentioned the chap 'phoning in a very very Welsh accent pleading with me to go & receive it & how I had to try & explain that I could not. Anyway they sent it to me the other day. I thought they would probably not as I did not go to the ceremony to receive it, but they did.

Some chap wants to make a 'live theatre' production of The Anathemata if you please! I can't conceive what he has in mind. It's an appalling thought, isn't it. He came to see me, the other day, he wrote months & months ago but I lost his letter & forgot all about it & wished I should hear no more, but he contacted Fabers & they asked me if I would mind his coming to see me, well, I said no: I didn't mind. He came & was a jolly nice young man, French by blood wholly, but brought up in England & anxious to produce things that the West End stage won't look at for commercial reasons. Well, I sympathize with that ~~[illegible]~~ very much in general terms, but distrust the idea of transferring one art-form into another. If a thing is for the stage then it should be written as a play ab initio. The Ana. seems utterly impossible. But of all things imaginable the sound-radio adaptation that Douglas did was just possible but to see the bloody thing passes my comprehension. He'd been in touch, unbeknown to me, with Douglas who was very keen on the idea, so he said. He asked me if I disliked the theatre. I said well, not positively, but actors voices I dislike to a pretty large extent. And I told him that under no circumstances could I get involved with the production of the bloody thing, that I wasn't that sort of chap — might as well ask me to ~~[illegible]~~ take charge of Trooping the Colour or something. I don't know what the outcome will be. He said he saw clearly what could be ~~[illegible]~~ made of it — so I don't know. I wish now I'd said flat, You can't do it. But I did not want to seem ~~[illegible]~~ totally unsympathetic, as he seemed a nice sort of bloke.✗

I'm jolly worried about all this vernacular or other thing of the Mass. They are all going round in circles hastily concocting translations, I can't see it can be ~~[illegible]~~ of value — there's a strange lack of pietas; (eg men of great zeal & piety & apostolic endeavour) for the huge riches of the Latin liturgy & the Chant — a kind of religious utilitarianism that I hate. All kinds of reforms were necessary enough god knows, but ~~[illegible]~~ to jettison the Latin liturgy seems to me so bloody that I can't think about it. god knows, it's not because I know any Latin, as you know, ~~[illegible]~~ except what I've assimilated from being a Catholic. ~~[illegible]~~ But in these islands everybody is more or less ~~[illegible]~~ able to read & the bi-lingual missals of one sort or another are available to all, so it's ridiculous to say that anyone has any excuse for not knowing what the prayers of the Mass mean. It's all part, I suppose, of the declension of the West. They make the comparison between this decision

✗ his name is Jean-Pierre Voos, French but ~~[illegible]~~ chancing to ~~have a~~ be of Dutch ancestry on his father's side. Jolly odd, he was a child in England with his mother at the beginning of the last war & was sent to a rural part of Wales because of the bombing. So he spoke for a while only French & Welsh. Then of course he had to learn English & long since has totally forgotten the Welsh. Jolly interesting how little children assimilate a language in a month or so & then forget it altogether. I knew of that happening to Cockney children evacuated to Wales. I met one such in a Welsh book-shop off Charing Cross Rd when I used to go to buy books. Little cockney girl with a howling Cockney father came in to buy a Welsh bible — she was about six or seven & had been in Wales only a few months & had come back for a few days to see her parents — she spoke fluent Welsh, not only to the astonishment of her father, but of Will Griffiths who ran the shop. I shall never forget that.

(6)

to vernacularize with what happened in the 4th Cent. when the Roman Liturgy changed from Greek to Latin, but it's no true analogy. We don't know actually much of the circumstances, but it would appear that in North Africa ~~[illegible]~~ & also later in Milan & thereabouts by slow processes Greek gave way ~~[illegible]~~ to Latin — which is quite a different thing from feverishly introducing ~~[illegible]~~ innumerable local tongues as the language of the central Xtian Mystery. But I can't go on, Must get this posted & write some other letters first.

Much love to Joan & thank you both for yr messages. I send my love to Rosalind when next you see her & to Robin.

Harman & Margaret went to southern Gaul on Wednesday for a week to see Sabina who is there or some school. Harman phoned me on Tuesday evening to tell me.

They held the 50th Anniversary Dinner of the 15th (London Welsh) Batt. R.W.F. on Oct. ~~2~~9th & had asked me to it as a guest, because of being in the 15th & because of writing I.P. but I didn't feel well enough to manage that. — apart from the usual stuff I've been suffering from some damned boil or irruption of some sort on my backside or very near — bloody painful & depressing. Anyway, had a nice letter from a chap who used to be the Adjutant of the battalion in the latter part of the war — he's been secretary to the Association for years & years. He sent me the souvenir of the Dinner celebration. — it was odd to see photographs of faces so familiar fifty years ago. such as ~~Bde~~ Major Gen. Price-Davies VC. C.B. C.M.G. D.S.O. the Brigadier, photographed here in full-dress uniform with a white-plumed hat — I recall him only in khaki. — he used to wear a specially-designed (& ~~extr~~ extremely sensible) water-proof attire difficult to describe, but a sort of tunic with pull-ons over his legs so that he was entirely covered in lightish khaki rain-proof. ~~And~~ he used to carry a very long stave ~~or~~ rather like a surveyor's measuring rod & marked in feet & inches, & he used to put this against the trench-wall & if ~~it~~ it was an inch or so less or more than the regulation height, he made one get it the exact height by taking out ~~a sand~~ headers & stretchers of sand-bags & empty a little earth out of them, or add more to them, as the case might be — very popular on a pitch dark night in ~~the~~ foreward trench, as you can imagine. Also a photograph of ~~Col. Bell~~ Col. R.C. Bell. D.S.O. of the Central Indian Horse, who commanded ~~us~~ us over the whole period ~~[illegible]~~ covered by I.P. — he was a jolly nice bloke — he is the "Colonel Dell presumed to welcome" of p. 154 of I.P.

I felt rather awful about not going to the dinner as the souvenir includes a whole page about I.P. & Douglas C.'s Radio adaptation of it. I had asked Capt. Fitzsimas (the adjutant mentioned above) if Fr Daniel Hughes S.J. M.C. was still alive — he was ~~our~~ Catholic chaplain & I used to talk with him when we were in the Ypres sector & he lent me a book of Francis of Sales — this was in ~~[illegible]~~ the spring of 1917, and it was really from then that I began to think of the Catholic Church. Well, alas, it's too late to write to him now, because he died, Fitzsimas told me, in 1960. & moreover Fitzsimas told me that he was sad about this because he was a mate of his & they had both received part of their education at St Francis Xavier's College, Liverpool, — so I suppose, from that, that Capt. Fitzsimas is a Catholic too which I did not, of course, know. As you can imagine nearly all the officers in the battalion were Nonconformists, or at least the Welsh ones. Well. God keep you

Much love

Dai.

~~T~~Talking of Fusiliers, I was astonished & pleased to find in Dr Smith's Eng-Lat. Dic. hand-grenade, malleolus bombardicus. (with a mark of interrogation between 'grenade' & malleolus)

P.S. Sunday. 8 Nov. Rock Lewis came yesterday after phoning. Very glad he did — & enjoyed him very much — what a nice bloke. Thanks for your messages. D.